

# Courier

## Inside this issue...

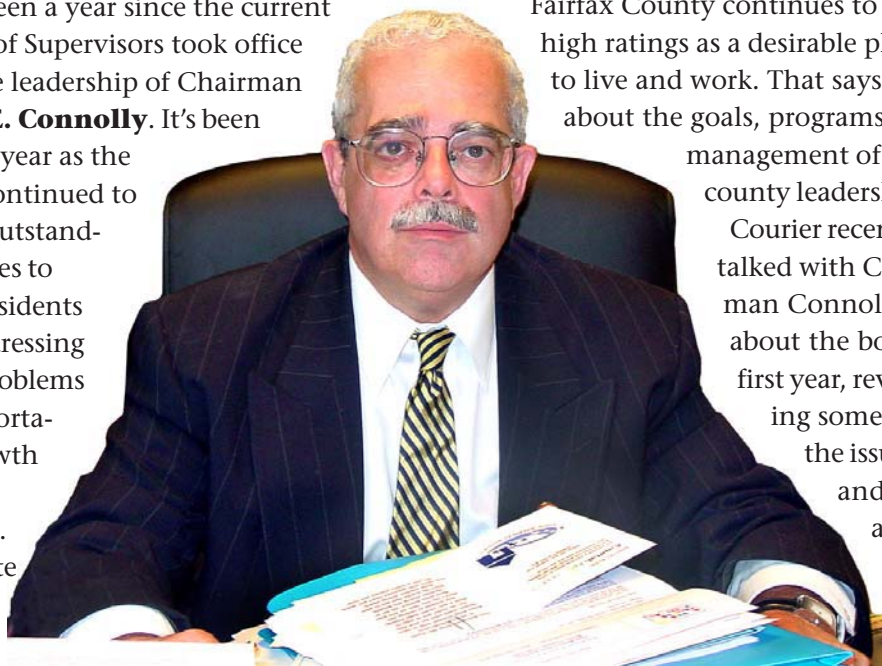
- ♦ **County progress**  
– 1
- ♦ **EAC – 1**
- ♦ **Employee focus**  
– 5
- ♦ **Pay period reminders – 5**
- ♦ **Benefit deductions – 6**
- ♦ **Public hearing**  
– 6
- ♦ **Briefs – 7**
- ♦ **Safety & Security**  
– 8
- ♦ **Vision posters – 8**

Use the hand symbol above to click the content topic and go directly to that page.

An interview with the chairman \_\_\_\_\_

## One year's work pays off

It has been a year since the current Board of Supervisors took office under the leadership of Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly**. It's been an active year as the county continued to provide outstanding services to county residents while addressing serious problems of transportation, growth and tax structures. But despite some challenges,



*Gerald E. Connolly, chairman of the Board of Supervisors.*

Fairfax County continues to get high ratings as a desirable place to live and work. That says a lot about the goals, programs and management of the county leadership. Courier recently talked with Chairman Connolly about the board's first year, reviewing some of the issues and ac-

*See Connolly, page 2*

## EAC represents county employees

This past year – 2004 – was a busy and eventful time for the Employees Advisory Council (EAC), one that saw the council expand from ten to eleven groups as well as the institution of grievance training sessions for employees.

Pay for Performance (P4P) continued to dominate the past year's agenda. EAC representatives met with each member of the Board of Supervisors on this and other employee-benefit issues. During

the budget hearings last April, EAC spokespersons, for the first time, included a PowerPoint presentation in their annual address to the Board of Supervisors. Speakers pointed out the uneven compensation plans in effect for county and school employees and showed that, should the proposed changes to P4P be adopted, an employee with a Fully Proficient rating would receive a mere 1.7 percent reward.

*See EAC, page 4*

*Connolly, from page 1*

complishments important to county employees and residents. Here is a summary of his comments.

**Courier:** How do you feel about this first year as chairman?

**Connolly:** I can't believe this whole year has flown by. I feel really good about what the board has accomplished in the first year. At the start, the board set an aggressive agenda, listing six priorities for the next four-year period and attaching an action plan to each one. These priorities are:

- ♦ Gang control and prevention
- ♦ Affordable housing emphasizing preservation
- ♦ An environmental vision
- ♦ A strong investment in education
- ♦ A transportation vision and plan which creates new choices and improvements
- ♦ Tax diversification that lessens the reliance on homeowner and property taxes

For the first time ever, we've adopted a comprehensive environmental vision for the county. For the first time ever, we've adopted a four-year transportation plan. We've made progress with the General Assembly on revenue diversification by getting a cigarette tax, a recordation tax and a hotel occupancy tax. I feel that on every one of the fronts we've identified as important, we've made some measurable definitive progress and we're going to continue on that path for the next few years.

**Courier:** "Smart Growth" seems to be a buzz word that we see with many local governments. What does it mean for Fairfax County?

**Connolly:** I think Smart Growth can

mean different things to different people, but for us it is concentration of mixed-use development near surrounding transportation nodes. People can access higher density residential and mixed-use development through multimodal transportation means such as Metro, train and bus services. We're increasing density in certain areas to lower sprawl and transportation congestion. That's how you get a handle on sprawl and congestion. Smart Growth will improve the way our county residents work and live.

**Courier:** You have already mentioned transportation is one of the important issues in the county. What progress do you feel is being made on this important issue?

**Connolly:** We had good and bad news this year relating to transportation issues. The bad news was the failure of the General Assembly to do anything about transportation in this last session. The good news, however, is that the voters of Fairfax County stepped up to the plate in the absence of state action and in overwhelming margins, approved the first transportation bond referendum in twelve years. Seventy eight percent of the voters of this county approved that transportation bond referendum. This, in itself, is an incredible accomplishment.

But we've also accelerated the completion of the Fairfax County Parkway with VDOT's help. We have critical projects near completion, such as the widening of Route 123 in the southern part of the county, starting the new REX express bus system in the Richmond Highway sector and intersection improvements throughout the county. We were able to revive the Eastern Tax District for Dulles rail funding, received federal funding for preliminary engineering and had the project approved as a Metro project even though this is going to be the first time that

Metro won't be building the rail line. The new flyover at the Springfield mixing bowl, now known as the Bob Heittman Bridge, has made an improvement almost  
*See Connolly, page 3*



**Connolly, from page 2**

overnight in the congestion on both sides of the beltway. We're proceeding with the study on "hotlanes" on the beltway and other roadways. So I think we've made a lot of progress this year in transportation and we're aggressively following that plan of action to create choices for our citizens.

**Courier:** Employees sometimes express exasperation about their ability to be rewarded for a job well done under the Pay for Performance evaluation system. Do you feel this system is working as it should?

**Connolly:** From the board's point of view, it was a necessary and useful reform to move into the Pay for Performance system. I would say on balance, I think it's working pretty well. Are there kinks in the system? Yes. Is it perfect? No. Can it be improved? Absolutely. I've committed to the EAC that we will continue working to achieve a system that is transparent and fair, the evaluation criteria are clear to employees and their supervisors, and that, to the best of our ability, bias and favoritism are removed from the system. We'll never arrive at 100 percent perfection, but we certainly can be vigilant and ensure that people can rely on the criteria and on the fairness of the performance evaluation. If that is lacking, then the whole system fails, and that's critical.

**Courier:** You've met with the Employee Advisory Council and have indicated your reliance on them for feedback and issues that are important to county employees. Is the EAC a good resource for the board?

**Connolly:** EAC is a good sounding board for both me and my colleagues, and we want to make sure it stays vibrant and active. We want to rely on the EAC for truthful, even if sometimes painful, feedback. County employees must know that the EAC is a viable channel in representing their issues and concerns to the board. We want everyone to be heard.

**Courier:** This summer, Fairfax County was selected by American City and Business Journals as one of the 10 most livable U.S. communities in the nation. That's quite a

recognition.

**Connolly:** Fairfax County is a great place to live and work. In communities our size, the county is first in home values, second with the highest median income and third in percentage of college graduates. Over the last 40 years, look at what Fairfax County has accomplished:

- ♦ Grown to the second largest employment generator in the region, creating more than 500,000 jobs,
- ♦ Created the 12th largest and one of the most successful school districts in America,
- ♦ Established one of the lowest dropout rates, and highest SAT score rates for college bound students,
- ♦ Enjoyed the lowest crime rate of the 50 largest jurisdictions in America with the smallest police force,
- ♦ Relied upon one of the lowest tax structures of a major urban jurisdiction,
- ♦ Created one of the most utilized, efficient and diverse library systems in America,
- ♦ Achieved the highest female participation in the work force in the U.S.,
- ♦ Maintained one of the highest median household incomes in the nation,
- ♦ Created one of the best park systems in any municipality,
- ♦ Established a world-renown Urban Search and Rescue Team,
- ♦ Voted the best managed county government in the U.S. in 2001,
- ♦ Built a civic involvement and quality of life that is the envy of all in the U.S.

**Courier:** So, you believe strongly in the future on Fairfax County?

**Connolly:** You bet! I believe we are a great team. Everyone has a role to play and all of us are called to the level of excellence in the performance of our duties on behalf of the citizens we serve. If we all become imbued with that mission, this county government is going to hum. So, pushing ourselves to always keep in mind our standard is one of excellence, then we will have a successful year this coming year. ■

Before being elected chairman, Gerald Connolly was the county supervisor for the Providence District for more than 10 years. He began his political career at the local level in his community. "I was president of the Mantua Civic Association during the oil tank farm spill in that area in 1991," said Connolly. "I cut my political teeth on this controversial issue which developed my skills at keeping the community calm and informed while searching for a fair and realistic solution."

Connolly was born and raised in Boston, Mass., and recalls as a child helping his father put up signs in 1958 to re-elect Senator John F. Kennedy. He later came to Washington, D.C. where he worked for the U.S. Senate for 10 years, traveling to more than 70 countries and writing policy reports for the Foreign Relations committee. "With my international background, it may seem odd that I developed a passion for local politics, but we all have a responsibility to get involved where we live," he said. "We must bloom where we are planted and Fairfax County is where I'm growing."



**Classified ads  
are on the  
Infoweb**

### *EAC, from page 1*

The EAC remains committed to fair and equitable compensation for employees and to providing a forum to explore perceived imbalances.

According to **Dorothy DeSpain**, EAC member and former chairperson, two major initiatives were accomplished this year. Because of the imbalance in agency size, the EAC created a new Group 11 consisting of all civilian employees in the public safety agencies compensated under Pay for Performance. At the Civil Service Commission hearing to approve the creation of this new group, the Commission encouraged the EAC to take the lead in providing employees with training and information regarding grievances. To accomplish this, the EAC has held several of these training sessions in various work locations over the past several months, helping employees and agencies "de-mystify" the nature of grievances.

In addition to the above, the EAC in 2004:

- ♦ participated in the Retiree Ad Hoc group seeking to improve health benefits for retirees
- ♦ participated in the county's Benefits Council meetings
- ♦ participated in RFP's (Request for Proposal) for dental benefits, life insurance and long term disability insurance
- ♦ purchased several microwaves for staff offices
- ♦ donated \$10,000 to the Tuition Assistance Program
- ♦ sponsored spring and fall craft shows at the Government Center
- ♦ lobbied the Board of Supervisors and senior county officials to approve the extension of D.R.O.P. (Deferred Retirement Option Program) to all county government employees

The EAC, under the leadership of Chairperson **Karen Conchar**, consists of representatives of 11 groups representing merit employ-

ees in various county agencies (see information box). The EAC meets three times each month, normally the first, second and third Thursdays in the Government Center. The meeting on the third Thursday includes the director of Human Resources and the county executive to ensure the lines of communications are always open between management and employees. "It's very important that employee concerns are expressed to top



**Chairman Connolly meets with EAC members.**

management and equally as important that the EAC understands and is able to articulate back to employees issues faced by management. It's a very necessary two-way street," said DeSpain.

Although EAC meetings are only closed in executive session, county employees are strongly encouraged to participate in the EAC through their group representatives. "Employees should express their concerns to their group representative," DeSpain pointed out. She also suggested that anyone interested in participating on the EAC consider the annual elections each spring. "This is a terrific way a merit employee can participate in building a strong county employee team," she said.

When asked if she feels the EAC is effective, DeSpain replied, "Oh, yes! During the last 10 years the EAC has grown in responsibility and influence to where it is considered an important connection among employees and top management as well as to the Board of Supervisors. But our focus is always on the employees. After all, it's the first word of our name," she smiled. ■

### **EAC Members**

**Karen Conchar, chair, Group 3;**  
**Randy Creller, vice chair, Group 7;**  
**Anita Baker, treasurer, Group 5;**  
**Dorothy DeSpain, secretary, Group 8;**  
**Vince Wang, Group 1;**  
**Sarah Goldman, Group 2;**  
**Steven Baker, Group 4;**  
**Joyce Lawson, Group 6;**  
**Sureyya Kanli, Group 9;**  
**Stella Normal, Group 10;**  
**Paula Ferrer, Group 11.**

# Mother and son double retirement

After more than 70 combined years of work for the county, **Cathy Provost**, accountant in DOE, and son, **John Provost**, with DPSM, are retiring together today. Cathy has completed over 41 years and John has completed over 31 years with the county.

Cathy began working for the county in October 1963. She started at the old courthouse and saw the construction of the Massey Building. She's also worked in many locations over the years - at the old health department, followed by City Square and eventually, the Government Center. When asked what were the biggest changes she's seen during her time with the government, she says moving toward more technology in the workplace and the diversity within the employees. Cathy says, "I'll miss my parking space that took me many years to get!"

Cathy, who's also a veteran of the Women's Army Corps, resides in Fairfax City with her four birds, one cockatiel and three parakeets. She has lived in her house for 43

years and has watched the explosive growth of GMU which is near her home.

John, who is Cathy's only son, began working for the county in February 1973.

He currently resides in Chantilly with his wife. John says he won't

have time to miss his job too

much as he has a list of things to do. He plans to

finish remodeling a

home he bought in West Virginia

between Harper's

Ferry and

Charlestown on the Shenandoah River

and perhaps turn it into a bed-and-

breakfast. He also

looks forward to traveling with his wife to Yellowstone Park and other places around the country to ride their Harley-Davidsons.

Congratulations for a job well done. ■



*Cathy Provost and John Provost*

## Pay period reminders of new tax rates

Pay period 26 (pay date Jan. 7) is the first pay disbursement (direct deposit or check) for tax year 2005 income tax purposes. The Social Security (OASDI) tax rate remains at 6.2 percent and Medicare tax rate remains at 1.45 percent (total FICA tax rate 7.65 percent). The 2005 taxable wage base for Social Security (OASDI) has increased to \$90,000 (\$2,100 increase from the 2004 wage base of \$87,900). Federal income tax withholding has decreased due to the increase of the annual personal exemption amount from \$3,100 to \$3,200, and increased the annual standard deduction amount for all filers. The impact on individual employees will be a slight reduction in the amount of federal income taxes withheld biweekly.

There are no changes in state income tax withholding for West Virginia, Pennsylvania,

Delaware or the District of Columbia.

Maryland state income tax withholding rates for some localities have changed for tax year 2005. Maryland residents of Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Calvert, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Kent, St. Mary's, Somerset and Washington localities will see an increase in their Maryland tax withholding. There is no change in Maryland state income tax withholding for residents of Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester localities. Virginia residents will see a slight decrease in the amount of state income taxes withheld biweekly due to the increase of the annual personal exemption amount from \$800 to \$900 and increase of the annual standard deduction amount from \$2,500 to \$3,000. ■

**Mailing 2004  
Wage and Tax  
Statements  
(Form W-2) will  
begin the week of  
Jan. 24.**

**If you have not  
received your  
Form W-2 by Feb.  
18,**

**contact your  
agency payroll  
representative  
or call  
703 324-3347  
TTY 703-222-7314  
to request a  
duplicate  
statement.**

## Focus on Benefits



# New deductions start today

Employees who have made changes to their benefits during open enrollment should check deductions in today's paycheck to ensure they are correct for the 2005 plan year. The 2005 biweekly deductions for health and dental insurance are listed below as well as the monthly group term life rates for optional and dependent coverage. If your deductions are incorrect, please make any changes as soon as possible by calling 703-324-4917, TTY 703-222-7314 or e-mail [HRBenefits@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:HRBenefits@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## Health/Dental Rates

Employee Biweekly Share		Employee Biweekly Share	
<b>FairChoice+BlueChoice</b>		<b>Delta Dental</b>	
♦ Individual	\$ 32.50	♦ Individual	\$ 6.66
♦ 2 Party	\$106.50	♦ 2 Party	\$ 12.58
♦ Family	\$156.50	♦ Family	\$ 20.72
<b>BluePreferred PPO</b>		<b>Monthly Group Term Life Rates</b>	
♦ Individual	\$ 37.50	AGE	Per \$1,000 coverage
♦ 2 Party	\$122.50	Under 30	\$ .09
♦ Family	\$180.00	30-49	\$ .17
<b>Kaiser</b>		50-59	\$ .31
♦ Individual	\$ 23.00	60-79	\$ .49
♦ 2 Party	\$ 75.50	<b>Monthly Dependent Coverage Premium</b>	
♦ Family	\$112.50	Low option (\$6,250/2,500)	\$2.50
<b>CIGNA</b>		High Option (\$12,500/6,250)	\$5.00
♦ Individual	\$ 25.50		
♦ 2 Party	\$ 83.50		
♦ Family	\$124.50		

Deductions for flexible spending accounts will not be taken in today's paycheck. These deductions begin in the next paycheck, Jan. 21. ■

## Public hearing on personnel regulation changes

A public hearing is scheduled for Feb. 8 on proposed changes to Chapters 4, 9, 10 and 12 of the Personnel Regulations. The hearing will be held at 7 p.m. in Conference Rooms 2/3 in the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax.

The proposed changes updating terminology and clarifying policy are summarized below:

- ♦ Add the Emergency Management Coordinator (director of the Office of Emergency Management) to the list of senior managers who do not earn compensatory time for overtime hours worked.

- ♦ Clarify that an employee demoted as part of a reduction in force with pay retention will continue to retain that pay level if the employee declines a position in the former job class reflecting current county policy

since 2000.

- ♦ Change the personnel regulation language from liberal leave to unscheduled leave to reflect last year's standardization of terminology used by local jurisdictions and the federal government when announcing closures or leave decisions.

- ♦ Change the performance management procedure indicating that when an employee has been supervised by more than one person during a review period, the performance rating will now be calculated by weighting the ratings of all supervisors based on the number of months of supervision.

For further information on the proposed revisions, visit the Department of Human Resources Web page on the Infoweb at <http://infoweb/HR>. ■

**Employees wishing to speak at the public hearing should call the Civil Service Commission at 703-324-2930, TTY 711.**

**If you have questions on the proposed revisions, contact Employee Relations, DHR, at 703-324-3495, TTY 703-222-7314.**



## Briefs

**2004 Onthank nominations being accepted**

Feb. 28 is the deadline for nominations for the A. Heath Onthank Memorial Award, recognizing accomplishments of outstanding worth in advancing and improving public service in the county government during 2004.

The award is open to merit employees of the Fairfax County government and to unified scale and food service employees of the Fairfax County Public Schools. Nominees must have completed their initial probationary period. Nominations may be made by fellow employees or citizens.

Nomination forms are available from members of the Board of Supervisors and department heads. For more information, contact **Robert Fitzpatrick** at 703-324-3306, TTY 703-222-7314.

**Homelessness doesn't know a season**

If someone you know in Fairfax County is experiencing homelessness, they are welcome to come in from the cold to sleep in a safe place. Call one of the community shelters about the winter programs: Bailey's Crossroads, 703-820-7621, TTY 711; Richmond Hwy., 703-799-0200, TTY 711; and Reston, 703-437-1975, TTY 711. For more information, contact **Diana Lotito**, DFS, at 703-324-5863, TTY 711.

**Test your "looks" at the Library**

On Tuesday, Jan. 11, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., the Access Services branch of the Fairfax County Public Library will offer free glaucoma screenings in Conference Room 123-C of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway.

"Unfortunately, many people with glaucoma don't experience symptoms until it's too late," explains Access Services' Branch Manager **Jeanette Studley**. "The test we're offering could help save someone's sight."

Those at greatest risk of the disease include people who are extremely nearsighted, those age 60 and older, diabetics, people related to glaucoma patients, and African Americans age 45 - 65.

If questions, please contact **Lois Kirkpatrick**, FCPL, 703-324-8319, TTY 711.

**NACo Achievement Awards**

Fairfax County has been invited to participate in the 2005 National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award program, which seeks to recognize innovative county government programs. There are many innovative programs and activities within the county government that are worthy of this national recognition. Please select any programs or projects you may wish to nominate and follow your internal approval process for participation. With your agency director's permission, submit all nominations to the Office of Public Affairs. As in the past, the county executive, the deputy county executives, the chief information officer, the chief financial officer and the director of public affairs will review the nominations and select the top county

programs to submit to the NACo competition. Entry fees will be paid by the Office of Public Affairs. All entries are due to the Office of Public Affairs, ATTN: NACo Achievement Awards, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 551, Fairfax, VA 22035-0065, by the close of business on Friday, Jan. 28. Late applications will be returned to the agency. Read the detailed criteria and follow the specific requirements described. For more information on the NACo Achievement Awards program or information on how to submit entries, contact the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935 or visit the NACo Achievement Awards Infoweb page at <http://infoweb/OPA/awards/htm>.

**When good music can be bad**

If you listen to music while at work, please don't do it through the Internet. Listening to music over the Web is a major concern for Information Security because it can open a port for vulnerability to malicious activity and it's a major resource drain on the county's network performance (bandwidth issues). Keep in mind that there is essentially one "pipeline" to the Internet that the county uses to send information out and that citizens use to access our Web site. If we clog this pipeline by using unnecessary resources, such as Internet music, than we clog this bandwidth and slow access for both us and citizens. ■

**How an election can affect your work**

The first Millennium Forum of 2005 gives you the insight of NPR correspondent **Mara Liasson** who will discuss how the 2004 election impacts local government. Please join us on Wednesday, Jan. 12, from 10:30 a.m. - noon in the Forum of the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway. The Millennium Forum is free to all current and retired Fairfax County employees. ■

# Security & Safety Matters

## Cold Weather Safety

Spending time outdoors during the winter season may cause several injuries and other health effects, collectively known as cold stress. Prolonged exposure to freezing or cold temperatures can result in serious health problems such as frostbite or hypothermia. Many people may experience cold stress when working –

- ♦ Outdoors on a cold day;
- ♦ In an unheated building;
- ♦ In cold water, rain, or snow;
- ♦ While handling cold objects or materials.

Here are some tips to stay safe during the winter season:

- ♦ Before going out into the cold weather, select clothing based on your activities and the predicted air temperature and wind speed. You should also know how to recognize the early warning signs and symp-

toms of cold injury, especially to areas exposed to the cold, such as the cheeks, nose, ears, fingers and toes.

- ♦ While outside in the cold, clothing choices and control of exposure are important. Clothing should be loosely-fitting and dry. Several layers of clothing rather than one heavy garment are recommended. Check every ten minutes or so to be sure there is no loss of feeling in toes, feet, fingers, hands, ears or nose, especially if you have been sitting or resting.

- ♦ Take a break indoors or seek shelter from winds at regular intervals. Do not drink alcohol in an attempt to stay warm.

- ♦ After cold exposure, remove boots, socks, gloves and other clothing and place in a warm and dry area. Immediately remove all wet clothing, as wet clothes draw heat from the body.

Check fingers and toes, (especially those of children, the elderly and infirm) to be sure they are dry and can re-warm. Avoid any re-exposure to the cold until you are fully re-warmed and clothing is dry.

- ♦ Seek medical attention if you have any symptoms of frostbite or hypothermia. Frostbite is characterized by white, waxy skin that feels numb and hard, while hypothermia may be characterized by uncontrolled shivering, slurred speech, clumsy movements, fatigue and confused behavior. Both require immediate emergency medical attention.

Contact **Amin Abdul-Aziz**, safety manager, Department of Finance, Risk Management Division, at 703-324-3063, TTY 711 if you have any questions regarding winter-related safety issues. ■




wide initiative. The items displayed on these posters are what unify us. When we embark on new or ongoing projects, we should get in the habit of asking ourselves 'How does this accomplish the countywide purpose and vision?' said Griffin.

For information about the posters, contact the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935. ■

## Vision for success

County Executive **Tony Griffin** recently asked senior managers to display posters with the county's core purpose, seven vision elements and the employee vision statement. "While each agency has unique goals and objectives, we all fit together into a bigger county-



Courier is published each payday Friday. The deadline for articles and notices is two weeks before publication.

Office of Public Affairs  
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 551  
Fairfax, VA 22035-0065

John Nash, editor  
703-324-3197, [john.nash@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:john.nash@fairfaxcounty.gov)  
E-mail: [courier@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:courier@fairfaxcounty.gov)  
FAX: 703-324-2010  
TTY: 703-324-2935

To comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Courier will be made available in alternative formats upon request. Please notify editor five to seven days in advance of your requirement.

See Courier online at <http://infoweb/courier>  
All rights reserved. © 2005